

A Kingdom Torn in Two

Chapter 14

Solomon, whose name means peace, found peace slipping away during the final years of his reign. His son Rehoboam was to take his place as ruler over the 12 tribes of Israel. A large party of disgruntled leaders led by Jeroboam showed up at Rehoboam's coronation ceremony requesting that he grant relief from the heavy burden of taxation and forced labor that Solomon had placed on them. Rehoboam rejected the counsel of the experienced elders and took the advice of his immature peers who theorized that bullying and intimidation were better leadership tactics than servanthood. Rehoboam promised even heavier taxation and more forced labor. With one decision, the nation divided and its fate was sealed.

Only Rehoboam's tribe of Judah remained loyal to him. The other 10 tribes to the north seceded, took the name of Israel and made Jeroboam their king. Instead of appreciating the gracious gift of God, Jeroboam, like Aaron centuries before, set up idols of counterfeit worship, leading Israel into idolatry. God sent a prophet who warned of judgment for their idolatry and predicted that someday a king named Josiah, a descendant of David, would destroy their pagan worship sites (this was fulfilled 290 years later.) As a sign to authenticate his message, the pagan altar split in two and Jeroboam's outstretched hand turned leprous. This did little to curb Jeroboam's pagan practices. When his son became ill he sent his wife in disguise to the prophet Ahijah to inquire about their son's fate. Though blind, Ahijah's spiritual sight was 20-20. He not only saw through the charade, but gave Jeroboam's wife a message of doom predicting that her husband's dynasty would soon end and Israel would one day be carried away into captivity. The message of doom was to be authenticated with the death of their son as soon as her footsteps crossed the entrance to the palace. And so it came to pass.

God's chosen people were now committing the same idolatrous and immoral practices that compelled God to purge the land of its Canaanite inhabitants in the first place. God's righteousness and covenant loyalty moved Him to jealous anger. Rehoboam allowed Judah to fall into the same idolatry as the North. The golden years of peace faded further when God judged Judah by using Shishak king of Egypt. He attacked Judah and carried off the all of the gold and silver treasures. Rehoboam replaced them with bronze, but the decline in moral and spiritual values was even sharper than the drop in value from gold to bronze.

Background of Lesson

- 1st & 2nd Kings originally 1 composition
- Covers approx. 413 years
- Lesson 14 covers approx. 60 years
- Written during exile to explain why things were as they were

Deuteronomy 17. 14-20

"¹⁴ When you enter the land the LORD your God is giving you and have taken possession of it and settled in it, and you say, "Let us set a king over us like all the nations around us,"¹⁵ be sure to appoint over you a king the LORD your God chooses. He must be from among your fellow Israelites. Do not place a foreigner over you, one who is not an Israelite.¹⁶ The king must write for himself a copy of the law on a scroll. He must keep these words and follow them carefully all his life. He must not accumulate large amounts of silver and gold.¹⁷ He must not take many wives, or his heart will be led astray.¹⁸ He must not accumulate large amounts of silver and gold.¹⁹ When he takes the throne of his kingdom, he is to write for himself on a scroll a copy of this law, taken from that of the Levitical priests. It is to be with him, and he is to read it all the days of his life, so that he may learn to revere the LORD his God and follow carefully all the words of this law and these decrees,²⁰ and not consider himself better than his fellow Israelites and turn from the law to the right or to the left. Then he and his descendants will reign a long time over his kingdom in Israel."

The Law

- Made 2 things extremely clear
 - Occupancy of Promised land was contingent on obedience to Law
 - One thing God would NOT tolerate was gods

Israel

- Was given the Torah – Mosaic Laws
- Had the revealed Word of God
- Had the revealed WILL of God
- Kings (all leaders) knew the Torah

1 Kings 11. 1-5

"¹ King Solomon, however, loved many foreign women besides Pharaoh's daughter—Moabitesses, Ammonitesses, Edomites, Sidonians and Hittites. They were from the nations about which the LORD had forbidden to Israel. "You must not intermarry with them, because they will surely turn your hearts after their gods." Nevertheless, Solomon held fast to them in love.³ He had seven hundred wives of royal birth and three hundred concubines, and his wives led him astray. ⁴ As Solomon grew old, his wives turned his heart after other gods, and his heart was not fully devoted to the LORD his God, as the heart of David his father had been. ⁵ He followed Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and Molek the detestable god of the Ammonites. ⁶ So Solomon did evil in the eyes of the LORD; he did not follow the LORD completely, as David his father had done."

Counsel for Rehoboam & Jeroboam

- Rehoboam
 - What was the counsel
 - How did they evaluate it
 - What did he do with it
- Jeroboam
 - What was the counsel
 - How did they evaluate it
 - What did he do with it

What makes for wise counsel?

Bad Leaders are Insecure

- When faced with a decision to show grace as a leader, to serve his kingdom rather than have his kingdom serve his own ego, Rehoboam chose the latter.
- Leaders who rule by intimidation and domination aren't leaders at all: their hunger for approval can never be satisfied, so they demand capitulation.

Insecure Leaders

- Always have something to prove
- Never got attention/approval from father figures
- Afraid they don't or won't measure up
- Won't deal with their own baggage
- Always throws up a smoke screen, an excuse
- Driven by shortcomings, not strengths

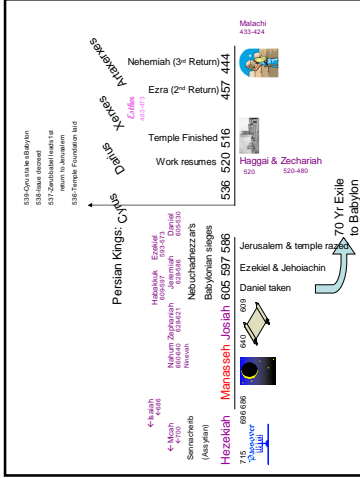
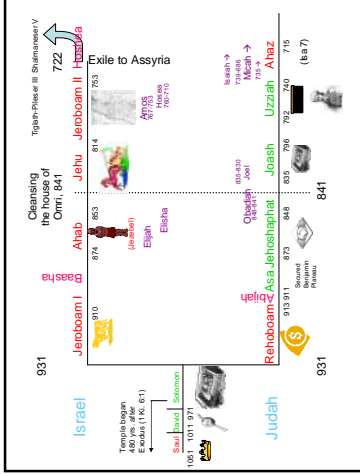
Bad leadership

- promotes division
- originates in fear
- always involves deception

Idolatry in Israel

- God could not have been clearer. If there was one thing that the Israelites were to understand, it was that God alone is God.
- When He **commanded** to Israel and Egypt that He alone is God to their gods.
- The LORD extent of the seriousness of this exclusivity in the Law given to Moses and the people of Israel. The Covenant of the Law was predicated upon the redemptive work of God on behalf of His people. He had redeemed them from slavery in the land of Egypt and out of the house of slaves, **THEY** were redeemed were – and are – to maintain an undivided devotion to Him. The First Commandment states, "you shall have no other gods before Me." The second forbids the worship of any idol and that anyone who does so is to die. **THEY** were to know that God's jealousy is not a thing.
- Israel experienced the judgment of God when they got involved in Baal worship in Moab just before entering the Promised Land. High Priest Phinehas stopped the heinous acts but 24,000 still died as a result.
- Israel began following after other gods after Joshua died. Their sin of idolatry inevitably led to other kinds of sin as well. (Judges/Ch. 5)

- It is much more difficult to detect a counterfeit that is created to look like the authentic.
 - The calf is reminiscent of the golden calf that Aaron made while Moses was on the mountain.
 - The cultic centers of Bethel and Dan were focal points to draw others away from the singular focal point of the Jerusalem temple.
 - Priests were appointed to replicate the Levitical priesthood of the true faith of God.
 - Offerings and sacrifices, and festivals provided worshipers a false sense of security.
- Jeroboam became the standard of evil by which all other kings were measured. Notice that accomplishments (as we would define them) are *not* the measurement of a good or evil king. *Nothing else mattered much except one's relationship with the LORD.* This truth never changes!



- King David understood well that the leader of God's chosen people had a unique privilege and responsibility to keep the Law. His commission to Solomon included the admonition to be obedient to the LORD (p. 144) to keep the throne. Sadly, Solomon did not heed the warnings of his father, and he followed after the gods of his many foreign wives toward the end of his life. This ignited the angry wrath of God (p. 157). God will always fulfill His word. He said He would take the kingdom from the king who failed to follow Him, and so He did (p. 157).

- After the kingdom divided, all of northern Israel's kings followed after other gods. Jeroboam, the first king of the north, created a counterfeit cult that looked remarkably like God-worship as prescribed by the Law. That is the insidiousness of idolatry – it takes turns a whole truth into a half-truth so that it is untruth.

The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life (2007)

The scope of pluralism in belief in practice in America's Evangelicals

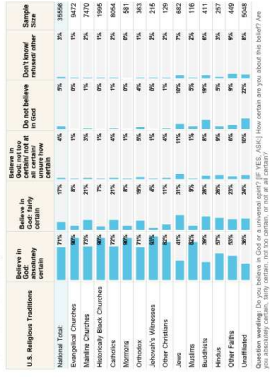
Importance of Religion in One's Life



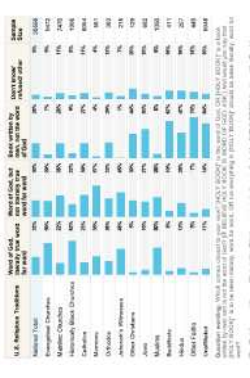
The Lower Story

- Primarily a list of idolatrous kings who lead both Judah and Israel further and further away from God.
- Abijah son of Rehoboam became the next king of Judah. His tenure was short and sinful like his father's.
- No good kings reigned in Israel after the split of the kingdom.
- Things went from bad to worse with the house of Omri. His evil son King Ahab and her royal wickedness Queen Jezebel drove Israel to new lows in idolatry.

Belief in God or Universal Spirit



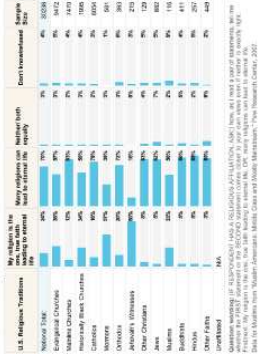
Liberal Interpretation of Scripture



The Upper Story

- Two things:
- First, those who reject the LORD will reap His grim judgment.
- Second, this judgment is always designed to redirect His people and produce repentance back toward the God who still relentlessly pursues His people, through prophets like Ahijah and kings like Asa who forged a path for people to find their way back to Him.
- The era of the kings, despite their terrible freedom, inaugurates a path to the King of Kings, who would redeem not just this era of division and strife, but every age from everlasting to everlasting.

Views of One's Religion as the One True Faith



Frequency of Attendance at Religious Services

